Introduction

During a student led activity held for the purpose of generating interest in the "Directions" survey, Middlebury College undergraduates were asked to name Middlebury's greatest strength. Fifty-three students provided statements in response. Statements were coded using Atlas.ti and themes emerged as relationships between or combinations of codes. A brief summary of the themes follows below.

Theme summary

- Support for students: Students noted the extent to which they feel supported at or by the College, some specifically noting abundant support from both faculty and other students.
  - A few students wrote generally about "resources," support for "student academic interests," and "the complete support system provided"; one stated, "They will give you help when you need it!"
  - Several students also noted the importance of "student professor relationships," "engaged professors," "professors who are invested in their students," "small class sizes," and "wonderful profs who care about students beyond grades and academics"; one student summed up the thoughts of several in writing about "wonderful connections that students form with professors. Midd has some awesome, open, caring profs who really take care of students!"
  - A few also noted the "sense of collective community," "forums for expression," student "activism," and "a platform [to] synthesize and open up imaginations"; one student shared, "Middlebury does a great job starting conversations about big issues. There are great talks and safe spaces sprouting up in which to consider race, diversity, and inclusivity. However, now we need to take action. Talking about it isn't enough. We need to work on concrete things to do." Another agreed, "Midd is great at having plenty of opportunities for people to do what they want/express themselves."

- Some students additionally wrote of feeling supported by their peers and "student's willingness to help in so many areas"; one wrote, "Everyone is so nice and welcoming!"
- A student also noted that they feel supported by the opportunities Middlebury provides for students, both inside and outside the classroom; one wrote, "School provides us with so many options (both academic and extracurricular) and will help us find and fund opportunities outside of Midd."

- Quality and rigor: Several students also wrote about the quality of the academics, the faculty, and the students; two also noted "academic integrity" and "academic honesty."
  - Several students wrote of the "amazing," "wonderful" faculty.
  - A few also wrote of the high quality of the students at the College; students wrote about "how students here are very thoughtful and committed make the classroom one of the best environments here," that "students here care [about] many things very deeply," and "genuinely curious students who compete against themselves, not one another."
  - Several also wrote about high quality, experiential learning at the College. One shared, "I most appreciate classes that apply what we're learning to what is actually going on in the world—beyond Midd. I'd like to see more of that in all my classes. Our education should have a purpose beyond the classroom." Another wrote of the "potential for critical thought/discussions."

- Idyllic, beautiful location: Some students noted the location as the greatest strength. Students wrote of "a beautiful connection to place," "our communal connection to the outdoors," and also of "the diversity of things to do in a rural place." One called it "a magical place." A student also commended the "grounds crew" who "keep it looking good."

- Diversity and inclusion: Some students wrote about the "diversity of opinions across campus" and "interests of the student body"; one also wrote of a "pretty diverse international student body and many different backgrounds," yet almost no students wrote about more common forms of diversity explicitly, including racial, ethic, or gender diversity.
  - A few students wrote comments related to inclusion as well, praising the College for supporting engagement with diversity related issues and "big questions," including

"great talks and safe spaces sprouting up in which to consider race, diversity, and inclusivity," as noted previously in the discussion of "support." As one student wrote, the College is "working toward inclusivity. There's still a way to go but I love our commitment."

- Global perspectives: A few students wrote that the College's greatest strengths are its "international efforts" and "international presence," as well as its commitment to "instilling global perspectives in a decidedly remote setting." One student stated that the language programs are the Colleges greatest strength.

- One student also noted a strength of the College is "the potential to make changes."

Table 1. Codes used in analyzing the student statement data and the frequency with which each was used.

Codes	Frequency
academic quality, integrity	5
curriculum, experiential learning, critical thinking	4
diversity, inclusion	6
evolving identity	1
faculty, quality	7
faculty-student relationships	6
global, languages	4
idyllic, beautiful, location	7
innovation	1
opportunities	1
Quality, rigor	13
sense of community, small and intimate environment	6
strength	1
student activism, responsiveness to students	10

Codes	Frequency
student support	12
students, quality	3
Support	23

Cells highlighted in blue represent "smart codes"; smart codes represent combinations of other codes. "Quality, rigor" includes: faculty, quality; students, quality; curriculum, experiential learning, critical thinking; and academic quality, integrity. "Support" includes: student support; student activism, responsiveness to students; sense of community, small and intimate environment; and faculty-student relationships. Smart code total frequencies do not add to the sum of their parts because some statements are coded with multiple codes.